

[The following manuscript obtained for publication was handed over to me by Study Assessor Eduard Radwan from La Paz, together with a quantity of good photographs, I comply with this charge the more willingly, since until now (leaving out some of the individual trophies resulting from surprise attacks on the Indians and individual observations which were made about captured Indians) hardly any detailed information has come forth. The small amount of material on hand until now is in the very complete manner of Erland Nordenskiöld in Dr. A. Petermann's information and it was brought together in the 57th Year 1911 S. 16ff, "The Siriono in East Bolivia." In this place are the few related statements drawn from the literature: D'Orbigny: "The American Man." Paris 1839. Bd. 11 S. 342f., Cardus: "The French Missions among the Infidels of Bolivia." Barcelona 1886 and Th. Herzog: "Contributions towards a Knowledge of East Bolivia," in Petermann's information. 1910 S. 199f. The proportionate area covered by the Siriono can be seen on the "Ethnographic map of East Bolivia" which Nordenskiöld appends to the mentioned treatise on Table 5. On Tables 6 and 7 there follows, aside from the photo of a captured Siriono from Urubicha, a number of images of tools which came from captives. The membership of the Siriono to the Tup linguistic stock, discussed by previous authors, is questioned by Nordenskiöld. For him also, more exact speech examples were impossible, since of the two captured Siriono which he had seen, the one had completely forgotten his language, and the other was not to be moved into giving any knowledge of his speech. Without question, the latter knew some Guarani, but he spoke chiefly a completely

5: Radwan--291

T-3

(1928?) 1928

Siriono-2

116, 114

different speech, which none in the surrounding rubber camps understood. According to Nordenskiöld, it is probably, with the Siriono a matter of primitive Indians, who have become largely "guaranized" after their contact with Guarani-speaking refugees.

Max Schmidt

5: Radwan--292  
116, 101, 114, 177

T-3

(1928?) 1928

Siriono

In recent years, various essays have been published about wild Indian peoples, who live in the forest area of the Departamentos Santa Cruz and Beni of Bolivia. The descriptions concern only two groups (Stämmer) that have already come into a good deal of contact with the white race. The one stands in a friendly relationship with a large land owner in Estrella, a small village lying on the road connecting Trinidad, the capital of the Departamento Beni, and the missions in Guarayos; the other group can be reached out of Quatro Ojas to the harbors on Rio Piray. Both branches have been made known from photographs, the first by the botanist, Dr. Werdermann (1926) and the second by the engineer and photographer Gerstmann (1927). A third branch, which belongs to the race of Sirionos and lives about twenty-five kilometers southwest of the mission, San Pablo, in Guarayos, Departamento Santa Cruz, are shown in the accompanying pictures which were picked up for the first time in November, 1927. At the end of 1927 and the beginning of 1928, Professor Dr. Wegner traveled through this area and it is safe to assume that still more pictures of this tribe will be published.

5: Radwan--292-293 T-3

(1928?) 1928

Siriono

116, 177, 609, 622, 797

The approachableness of the branch in the neighborhood of San Pablo is the work of missionary R. P. Albert Singer, prefect of the mission in Guarayos, who has lived many years in this forest area: On his [293] frequent expeditions through the marshy woods, he has become well known to the Siriono who have watched him from hiding-places. An arrow shot, which he received several years ago from a Siriono in ambush, bespeaks the dangers which he has endured.

In the year 1927, the existence of this group was menaced by a sickness similar to grippe, which also killed the man who was chief at that time. Then the influential warriors decided to choose Father Albert Singer as their chief. A delegation sought him out in the near-by mission and notified him of the vote. An understanding was possible for the speech of the Siriono and the Guarayos both stem from the Guarani language. Thanks to the work of the missionary, a new mission called Santa Maria is in a fair way to coming into existence, the first among the Siriono.

5: Radwan--293  
116, 181, 342, 361, 621

T-3

(1928?) 1928

Siriono

The Sirionos are true forest Indians. In groups of about fifty, they lead a hidden life in the dark of the forest, shunning clearings and especially the grass plains, "Pampas." The entire group generally lives in a single hut of light structure. For perpendicular beams, trees are used most frequently. At a height of about two meters, cross beams are fastened with the help of creeping vines on which leaves of the motacu palm are leaned. On the edge of the forest path about 30 meters before and behind the hut, skulls of captured animals are impaled on a stake, sometimes ten one above the other.

After the death of a member of the group the hut is abandoned for good. The trifling belongings of the dead person stay behind in it. [294] The corpse finds its last resting place in a special grave-hut which has a conical shape. It lies on mats of palm leaves, which are spread out on a wooden frame from one half to one meter high. It is also covered with similar mats. Above this is enthroned the severed head. It stands above the neck with the face turned towards the feet. The opening of the grave-hut is carefully covered. Seemingly, after some time the skull is carried back into the abandoned dwelling-hut. There it lies on a fire-hearth. Once upper and lower jaws of the skull were tied together with a vine. Some families always take skulls with them. Probably it is a matter of being those of the relatives.

5: Radwan--294  
116, 286, 352, 415

T-3

(1928?) 1928

Siriono

The household utensils of the Sirionos are of the simplest sort. They consist of some black pots, hammocks, carrying baskets, woven pieces, and pipes. The hammocks of knotted ropes, serve as beds. Often, for lack of space, they are hung above one another. In some pictures, one can clearly recognize the weaving stick and the different types of carrying baskets.

5: Radwan--294[2]

T-3

(1928?) 1928

Siriono

116, 276

The pipes are about ten centimeters long, they widen conically and are not bent towards the top. The smoker must tilt his head way back on his neck, in order not to lose the tobacco out of the bowl. The tobacco has a green colour and is almost pulverous.



5: Radwan--294 [3]

T-3

(1928?) 1928

Siriono

116, 342, 411, 727

They take great care in the fashioning of their weapons. The arrows are to be regarded as true works of art. Bows and arrows have a considerable length of one and a half to two and a half meters. The bows are kept in water, the arrows lie in the hut. In a corner there is a kind of ground-floor (Bodenraum) due to some special cross-beams against which the arrows and provisions rest. The feathers of the arrows dangle freely in the air. Probably today every Indian group possesses axes or sword-like knives (machete) which were obtained as booty while on raids.

5: Radwan--294-295  
116, 142, 283, 291, 301

T-3

(1928?) 1928

Siriono

The Siriono go completely naked. Their skin is copper brown; a member of this group appeared to be almost white. But on closer examination the colour showed itself to be light yellow. The women wear necklaces as ornaments; both sexes decorate their hair with feathers. [295] Above the elbows and below the knees, they wear cords. The men protect their wrist with a binding of similar cord against the returning bow string when releasing the arrow.

5: Radwan--295 T-3

(1928?) 1928

Siriono

116, 302, 304, 321, 412

With the help of resin, which they also use to anchor feathers in their hair, they tear out the eye-brows and forehead hair. Each according to his taste, young and old, cut their hair short, for which mussel shells serve as scissors. Such a shearing claims a whole day. By scratching with the mussel shells, the Sirionos achieve scars (tattoos) on the upper arms and lower legs.

5: Radwan--295[2]  
116, 302, 846, 852

T-3

(1928?) 1928

Siriono

On festive occasions they paint themselves. Thus, a married couple painted themselves red on the third day after the birth of a child; sparkling in the same colour was the little hammock in which the mother, accompanied by the husband, carried it for its first walk outside the hut the next day. All members of this family had decorated their hair with feathers. On the preceding days, the father had to be confined to the child-birth bed. Even the new-born babe would be shorn of its eye-brows and forehead hair in the same manner, during which it cried lustily.

5: Radwan--295[3]  
116, 481, 516

T-3

(1928?) 1928

Siriono

Noticeable is the foot position of the forest Indians. As a result of their feet pointing inwards, their run is like a waddle. Grown-ups and children also arouse interest through their ungainly, fat stomachs.

5: Radwan--295 [4] T-3

116, 224, 241, 262, 462

(1928?) 1928

Siriono

The forest Indians, feed themselves principally through the hunt and as a result lead a nomadic life. The women accompany their husbands on hunting trips, bearing the hammocks and the baskets with the prize, while the men carry only the weapons. Their nourishment consists of fish, birds, four-footed animals, forest fruits, honey, etc. Agriculture is resorted to only in direst circumstances. In natural clearings, they particularly plant yuca. The plantings can hardly be differentiated from the underbrush.

5: Radwan--296  
116, 177, 609, 856

T-3

(1928?) 1928

Siriono

The children of the Siriono mature early and surprise one by their mental capabilities. Very soon they overcome their inherent shyness before the white visitor. Trust and confidence then glow in their eyes. What a contrast to the dejected ways of those in bondage on the estates of the whites!

It would be in the interest of Bolivia to welcome it, if the missionary were to lure more distantly wandering branches of Sirionos from the forest, to save and settle them and rear them up as self-respecting farmers. In the distant future—the railroad construction from Cochabamba to Santa Cruz is already under way—these forest areas will be cultivated and it will be pre-eminently cattle-raising, which requires broad free plains. Through this the hunting-grounds of the forest Indians are gradually being reduced to nought; and they themselves will be forced to live a miserable existence as serfs on the estates of the whites and to disappear as a people. Every one who truly has the well-being of the forest Indians at heart, will approve only the former development; for in the mission the native crafts and language and the majority of their habits and customs are kept.